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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 001015

SIPDIS

STATE FOR ARMITAGE, GROSSMAN, SA-DOBBINS, S/P, PM.
NSC FOR DR. RICE AND MR. HADLEY.
DOD FOR RUMSFELD AND WOLFOWITZ.
JCE FOR MYERS.

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1.6X5, X6

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [IT](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [IT](#) [IR](#) [IRPREL](#) [AFGHANISTAN](#)

SUBJECT: EX-KING DETERMINED TO GO HOME, BUT CONCERNED ABOUT ARRANGEMENTS

REF: A. KABUL 200
[B](#). STATE 35613
[C](#). ROME 918
[D](#). USNATO 214

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CLASSIFIED BY: POLMINCOUNS THOMAS COUNTRYMAN, REASONS 1.6 X5 AND X6.

[1](#). (S) SUMMARY: SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY KHALILZAD CALLED ON FORMER KING OF AFGHANISTAN ZAHIR SHAH FEBRUARY 25. FOR MOST OF THE SESSION, GENERAL WALI, ROYAL SON MIR WAIS, GRANDSON MUSTAPHA, SULTAN GHAZI AND HAMID SIDDIQ JOINED. ZAHIR WAS IN GOOD SPIRITS AND APPARENT GOOD HEALTH, JOKING WITH HIS VISITORS, THEN PUFFING A CIGAR. MOST OF THE DISCUSSIONS CENTERED ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR ZAHIR'S PLANNED RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN IN MID-MARCH FOR NAWRUZ, THE AFGHAN NEW YEAR. KHALILZAD ALSO MET WITH ITALIAN MFA UNDER SECRETARY MARGHERITA BONIVER AND AFGHANISTAN'S AMBASSADOR TO ITALY, HAMED NASSIR ZIA. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (S) ZAHIR SHAH APPEARED ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED TO GO TO AFGHANISTAN, PENDING ADEQUATE ARRANGEMENTS. THIS MAY NOT EQUALLY APPLY TO HIS ENTOURAGE, WHO SEEMED MUCH MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION THAN THE KING HIMSELF. (COMMENT: SEE ALSO REF C. IT APPEARED ZAHIR SHAH'S FAMILY'S CONCERNS WERE NOT AS EXTENSIVE AS INDICATED IN THOSE MEETINGS, AND WERE IN ANY EVENT GREATLY ASSUAGED BY KHALILZAD'S VISIT. END COMMENT.) THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL FLY THE KING AND HIS ENTOURAGE TO KABUL, PERHAPS ON A DC 9, BUT THE ROUTING WAS UNCLEAR. KHALILZAD SUGGESTED THAT ENTERING AFGHANISTAN FROM THE NORTH, (I.E. UZBEKISTAN) MIGHT NOT RAISE POLITICAL CONCERN AS WOULD AN ENTRY FROM ELSEWHERE.

[3](#). (S) AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, THE KEY ROYAL CONCERN REMAINS SECURITY. KHALILZAD EXPLAINED THAT ISAF IS
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BEGINNING TO TRAIN A PRESIDENTIAL GUARD AND WILL INTENSIFY THIS EFFORT. THIS UNIT WILL NUMBER 600 MEN, BUT UNFORTUNATELY ONLY 200 HAVE SHOWN UP THUS FAR. THIS WILL BE THE PRINCIPAL SECURITY FOR THE FORMER KING'S RESIDENCE, SUPPLEMENTED BY ISAF, BUT WILL ALSO PROTECT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. IN ADDITION, KARZAI HAS CLOSE PROTECTION OFFICIALS BEING TRAINED, AND HAD OFFERED TO MAKE SOME AVAILABLE TO THE KING. ISAF WOULD BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE STATIC PROTECTION AROUND THE KING BUT WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PERFORM CLOSE PERSONAL PROTECTION. THE KING'S ADVANCE IN KABUL HAD INDICATED THAT KARZAI WOULD MAKE AVAILABLE SOME PERSONNEL, WHEN TRAINED, AS THE KING'S BODYGUARDS.

[4](#). (S) THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF IRANIAN INTERFERENCE WITH THE KING AND OTHERS ECHOING CONCERN ABOUT IRAN'S DUAL TRACK APPROACH TOWARD AFGHANISTAN. AFTER HEARING THAT ISMAIL KHAN WAS PLAYING IRAN AGAINST THE U.S. TO GAIN ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE, ZAHIR REMARKED THAT THIS REMINDED HIM OF HIS EARLY DAYS WHEN THE RUSSIANS AND THE BRITISH SIMILARLY COMPETED OVER AFGHANISTAN. THIS COMPETITION WAS USED BY THE THEN-RULERS TO RETAIN THE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE.

[5](#). (S) GEN. WALI WONDERED IF IT MIGHT NOT BE USEFUL TO RECRUIT YOUNG AFGHAN-AMERICANS WITH SOME TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PROTECTION DETAIL. WE ENCOURAGED THE ROYAL FAMILY TO ACTIVELY SEEK OUT THOSE IT COULD TRUST FOR ITS PERSONAL SECURITY UNIT.

[6](#). (S) KHALILZAD NOTED THAT RENOVATIONS TO THE RESIDENCE IDENTIFIED FOR THE KING, WHICH IS OUTSIDE THE ROYAL PALACE, ARE LARGELY COMPLETED, AND IT SHOULD SOON BE READY FOR
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OCCUPANCY. IN ADDITION, ISAF HAD INFORMALLY AGREED TO PROVIDE ZAHIR WITH EMERGENCY AND OTHER IN EXTREMIS MEDICAL SERVICES.

[7](#). (S) KHALILZAD MET SEPARATELY WITH THE KING TO PASS THE MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM KARZAI AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN KABUL THAT

GRANDSON MUSTAPHA WAS TOO CONTROVERSIAL TO MAKE THE TRIP WITH THE KING AT THIS TIME (REFS A AND B). ZAHIR AGREED, BUT ASKED KHALILZAD TO BREAK THE NEWS TO MUSTAPHA, WHICH HE DID IN A MEETING LATER IN THE DAY. THE SWEETENER, AS SUGGESTED BY THE IA, WAS AN OFFER OF A DIPLOMATIC POST. MUSTAPHA AGREED AND PLANNED TO PROVIDE A LIST OF HIS PREFERENCES LATER IN THE EVENING.

18. (C) KHALILZAD ALSO MET WITH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS UNDERSECRETARY MARGHERITA BONIVER. BONIVER CONFIRMED THAT THE GOI HAS ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE KING'S RETURN WELL IN HAND. HE WILL BE FLOWN IN A CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT TO AN AIRPORT NEAR KABUL, WITH THE FINAL LEG OF THE JOURNEY MADE IN A MILITARY AIRCRAFT. BONIVER EXPRESSED MILD FRUSTRATION WITH SOME OF

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2454
NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

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THE IDEAS OF THE KING'S ENTOURAGE, SUCH AS THE SUGGESTION THAT THE ENTIRE GROUP OVERNIGHT IN DUBAI. KHALILZAD SUGGESTED THAT THE GOI DECLARE THAT THE GROUP WOULD MAKE THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE ROUTE TO MINIMIZE DISCOMFORT TO THE KING.

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HE NOTED THAT LANDING IN TASHKENT OR DUSHANBE WOULD MEAN A SHORTER FLIGHT IN A LESS COMFORTABLE MILITARY AIRCRAFT FOR THE KING'S FLIGHT INTO KABUL. BONIVER APPRECIATED HIS IDEAS.

19. (C) KHALILZAD BRIEFED BONIVER ON THE SECURITY SITUATION INSIDE AFGHANISTAN, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF IA CHAIRMAN KARZAI'S REQUESTS THAT ISAF BE EXTENDED BOTH IN TIME AND TO OTHER LOCATIONS. HE SAID THERE WAS CLEARLY A NEED TO TRAIN AFGHAN MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES, BUT UNTIL THESE FORCES ARE UP TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, HOW CAN AFGHANISTAN'S SECURITY BE ASSURED? WHEN ASKED ABOUT ITALY'S PARTICIPATION IN ISAF, BONIVER'S INITIAL RESPONSE WAS THAT ITALY WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND ITS PARTICIPATION. SHE QUICKLY ADDED THAT DEFENSE MINISTER MARTINO WOULD HAVE TO DECIDE AND NOTED HE HAD RECENTLY SAID ITALIAN PARTICIPATION IN ISAF WOULD NOT BE EXTENDED BEYOND THE INITIAL THREE MONTHS. SHE ENCOURAGED THE USG TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH MARTINO, HOWEVER, IF WE WANTED FURTHER INFORMATION ON ITALIAN PLANS.

10. (C) COMMENT: MARTINO HAD USED ITALY'S POTENTIAL COMMAND OF AN EXTENDED TASK FORCE FOX AS ONE REASON NOT TO PARTICIPATE FURTHER IN ISAF. LAST WEEK'S DECISION THAT GERMANY, NOT ITALY, WOULD COMMAND TFF COULD CONCEIVABLY CAUSE HIM TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE. HOWEVER, HE HAS BEEN CLEAR IN PUBLIC COMMENTS AND THOSE MADE IN MEETINGS WITH USG OFFICIALS, THAT HE HAS OTHER GOOD REASONS FOR NOT EXTENDING OR EXPANDING ITALY'S ISAF ROLE. HE WAS, INDEED, VERY RELUCTANT TO PARTICIPATE IN ISAF IN THE FIRST PLACE. HE PREFERS TO FOCUS ITALY'S LIMITED MILITARY RESOURCES AND TROOPS, WHICH ARE ALREADY STRETCHED THIN BY OEF AND BALKANS OPERATIONS, ON BOLSTERING REGIONAL STABILITY CLOSER TO HOME.

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END COMMENT.

11. (C) FOLLOWING THE MEETING WITH U/S BONIVER, CHIEF OF STAFF GIORGIO MALFATTI FOLLOWED KHALILZAD INTO THE HALLWAY TO URGE THAT ATTENTION BE PAID TO IRAN'S ONGOING EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE DIRECT COOPERATION WITH EU MEMBERS ON AFGHAN RECONSTRUCTION. MALFATTI SAID THIS AS A CONSISTENT AND RELATIVELY HARD-SELL IRANIAN APPROACH TO ALL EU MEMBERS; HE

MENTIONED ITALY, GERMANY AND FRANCE IN PARTICULAR. MALFATTI SAID THE GOI DID NOT INTEND TO ENGAGE IN SIGNIFICANT BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH IRAN ON AFGHAN RECONSTRUCTION, BUT URGED U.S. ATTENTION TO THE PHENOMENON.

112. (U) DR. KHALILZAD CLEARED THIS CABLE IN SUBSTANCE BEFORE DEPARTING POST.
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